

## Returning to service: LiveWire Libraries and COVID-19

### **1.0 Background**

On 21st March in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and Government guidance, Warrington Borough Council and LiveWire closed all 12 of the town's public libraries.

This document outlines the library offer during the pandemic and LiveWire's plans for the phased reopening of all of the town's library sites, in line with Government guidance and in agreement with Warrington Borough Council.

### **2.0 Lockdown**

\*Statistical information included in the summary below is for the period 21<sup>st</sup> March to 30th June 2020;

During the Covid-19 lockdown period, LiveWire libraries delivered the following virtual offer:

- Expanded the service's eBook and eAudio collection which generated a 436% increase in eBook borrowing (5,546 extras loans) and attracted 519 new members to the eBook/audio service
- Introduced an eComic service which saw 185 items borrowed
- Since April LiveWire Libraries have posted regular updates on various Social Media channels based on various themes. Posts include:
  - eBook and eAudio adult and Children's book reviews
  - coding club activities
  - virtual reading group
  - national library / book based initiatives
  - online resources to support home schooling
  - Reading for Wellbeing including Mood-Boosting Books and daily online reading sessions
  - Links to resources for under 5's including rhyme and story times
  - LEGO clubs and challenges
- LiveWire's Library Facebook Group had over 110 members
- The Home Library Service continued as a befriending service. Library staff regularly contacted the service's volunteers and their 120 clients, all of whom fall into one of the governments vulnerable categories. The intention was to identify if any of them required any additional support or assistance and, where necessary, they were signposted into the relevant support services.
- Four new clients joined the Home Library Service between April and June
- As a member of North West Libraries Connected "Reconnect and refresh" group LiveWire's Strategic Lead for Libraries contributed to Libraries Connected's *Service Recovery Toolkit* which is a collaborative approach to the reopening of library services.

### 3.0 Reopening Plan

The reopening plan is intended to be a live document, which will be updated to meet the latest national and local requirements and guidelines for best practices in public health and community containment of the COVID-19 virus.

The plan is to serve as a framework for the gradual movement between phases, including regression to earlier phases if circumstances dictate. Reopening plans centre on the following principles:

- Customer and staff safety.
- Giving customers the confidence to borrow books in a friendly, safe and hygienic manner.
- Building layout enables the introduction of social distancing measures including the flow of customers around the library space and the ability to create a natural passage way and the use of buildings entrances.
- Effective utilisation of the workforce to support the reopening of services, i.e. increased staffing in the sites opening as part of phase 1 to support a cleaning regime and flow of customers in the buildings.
- LiveWire's Hub sites are part of a bigger wellbeing offer and the libraries play a key role in the town's wellbeing and COVID-19 recovery agenda.
- Geographic location of sites enables LiveWire to have a borough-wide offer.

Each phase in the plan happens incrementally, depending upon available staff, supplies and library environment.

Other key points to accompany the reopening plans:

- Charges for overdue books and other items issued have been removed from 1 March until full service resumed.
- Items loaned from 1 March have had their loan period extended until 7<sup>th</sup> November.
- Increase in the number of items available to loan from 10 to 20.
- Charges to loan talking books removed until full service resumed.
- Continued development of access to a range of online resources to support home study.
- Process for online joining simplified.
- Introduced free access to eBooks, eAudio and eComics online.
- Developed library Facebook page as a platform to share local and national library initiatives, videos on keeping well and at-home exercises.

Phase	Timeframe/ Date	Service area	Comments
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reopen 7 sites</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8 July</b></p>	Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced opening hours.</li> <li>• Increased staffing to support customer journey.</li> <li>• All furniture removed to restrict customer dwelling in the space.</li> <li>• Social distancing introduced in all areas of the library to keep both customers and staff safe.</li> <li>• Restrictions on the number of people accessing the library at any one time and the duration of visits will be limited to 15 minutes.</li> <li>• A contactless returns and issue process introduced.</li> <li>• One-way systems around library buildings will be in operation, with floor markings and directional signs.</li> <li>• All returned books will be quarantined for 72 hours before being returned to the shelves for people to loan.</li> <li>• Customers discouraged from handling books during their time in the library. However, wipes will be provided to ensure books can be wiped down by staff if handled.</li> <li>• Magazines and newspapers not available.</li> <li>• Study space not available.</li> <li>• Enhanced scheduled deep cleaning regimes by staff.</li> <li>• Hand sanitiser made available for customers and staff.</li> </ul>
		Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub Library	
		Woolston Neighbourhood Hub Library	
		Warrington Central Library (main town library)	
		Burtonwood Library & Post Office (community)	
		Lymm Library (community)	
		Stockton Heath Library (community)	
		Order & Collect Service	<p>Launched new order &amp; collect service from 8<sup>th</sup> July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service allows customers to order and receive books without coming into the library.</li> <li>• Email/phone based service.</li> <li>• Customer completes proforma to highlight type of books preferred.</li> </ul>

Phase	Timeframe/ Date	Service area	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff liaise with customers to coordinate collection of pre-selected items at Hub site.</li> </ul>
		Home Library Service	<p>From 8<sup>th</sup> July LiveWire's Home Library Service was resumed supporting existing customers, but offer expanded to offer a service to those who are, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staying at home as they are shielding.</li> <li>Unable to travel to one of the open libraries.</li> </ul> <p>Service will develop in line with the volunteer programme.</p>
	20 July	People's Network PCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of PCs available reduced to support the safety of customers and staff in line with social distancing requirements.</li> <li>Booking in advance required.</li> <li>Same-day bookings may be permitted, but are subject to availability.</li> <li>Limited to 1 booking per person per day.</li> <li>Printing available.</li> <li>Photocopying available at Central Library.</li> </ul>
<b>2 Reopen 1 site</b>	3 August	Culcheth Library (Community)	Replicated those measures put into place for the reopening of those libraries in phase 1.
	10 August	Online activities	<p>Plans are being discussed regarding further development of the provision of LiveWire libraries' on-line activities, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch Facebook page</li> <li>Digi clubs</li> <li>Regular virtual reading group</li> <li>Live streaming story/rhymetime</li> <li>Interactive craft sessions</li> <li>Activities linked to Summer Reading Challenge</li> </ul>

Phase	Timeframe/ Date	Service area	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local history projects with Culture Warrington</li> <li>• Reminiscence projects in collaboration with Culture Warrington</li> <li>• Lego club</li> <li>• Activities linked to Libraries Connected's Universal Offer calendar</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>  <b>Reopen 2 sites</b>	September	Padgate Library (community)	Replicated measures put into place for the reopening of those libraries in phase 1.
		Penketh Library (community)	
<b>4</b>	November – December	Events & Activity programme	Review Government guidance and local R – rating in line with LiveWire libraries activity programme and consider phased introduction of key activity programmes.

#### 4.0 Reopening LiveWire Libraries

\*Statistical information included in the summary below is for the period 8<sup>th</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020

Since the phased reopening of LiveWire libraries from the 8<sup>th</sup> July there has been;

- 30,101 Visit
- 21,411 Book issues
- 2,250 eBook issues
- 1,164 eAudio issues
- Over 180 new Facebook page followers
- Eight potential new volunteers have been interviewed as part of the Home Library Service
- Home Library Service attracted two new clients. A concentrated campaign will be undertaken to recruit of new clients to the service once the team have fully recruited the potential volunteers to deliver the offer
- Seven of residents have access the Order & Collect service

## **5.0 Looking ahead and the role of LiveWire libraries in Warrington's COVID-19 recovery agenda**

### **5.1 Wellbeing**

- COVID-19 will have escalated the demand for additional services to support residents with low levels of mental health and wellbeing in the town. Libraries are well positioned to provide activities and reading provisions to support these residents.
- Libraries have a trained workforce who can direct residents to the Reading Well initiative which includes Books on prescription and self-help guides for support in managing stress, anxiety and depression. Library staff are also trained to deliver *Read to Relax* sessions that can support residents with low to moderate mental health issues.
- As part of an integrated offer, LiveWire's libraries are in a position to deliver a programme of activities from the sites to support an individual's wellbeing which includes mindfulness, Yoga, Tai Chi as well as arts and craft activities.
- Libraries are seen as more welcoming and less intrusive places than clinical settings, thus providing an opportunity for low level prevention services to be delivered from these venues; potentially reversing the lack of uptake of medical services witnessed during COVID-19.

Libraries and their programme of activities provide safe and neutral spaces which assist with combating the risk of isolation and loneliness for vulnerable residents.

### **5.2 Outreach**

- LiveWire's Library Outreach Service provides a great platform for the team to engage with Warrington residents in community settings; offering a hand holding and confidence building service to enable them to access activities and programmes to support their wellbeing and recovery.

### **5.3 Employment**

- LiveWire libraries have always been venues for job clubs. This relationship will further develop and expand to allow more opportunities for key partners to deliver training opportunities to support the re-employment agenda.

#### 5.4 Education

- Partnership working with local schools and other education partners is key to LiveWire libraries supporting the reading and learning agenda in the town. Key Initiatives include programmes aimed at children who struggle to engage in reading or have low literacy levels. LiveWire already delivers a successful *Reading Ahead* scheme which the team can build upon and expand.

#### 5.5 Digital

- Libraries provide access to IT services and in partnership with key providers, training programmes can be delivered to support those residents with little or no IT skills to get online.

#### 5.6 Cultural

- LiveWire's digital platforms enables libraries to support local artists by providing them with an online platform to showcase their work and to reach new audiences. LiveWire's partnership with Culture Warrington further strengthens its ability to build and develop a cultural offer post COVID-19.

#### 6.0 National Libraries Week and National Poetry Day

- Everyone knows that the current pandemic presents a challenging time which means LiveWire libraries are delivering their current events and activities a bit differently.
- Libraries now have a dedicated FaceBook page which can be found at Yourlivewire libraries <https://www.facebook.com/YourLiveWireLibraries> this allows us to stay connected with our communities and invite them to get involved with all the exciting book-themed things we do.
- National Poetry Day is 1 October and we will be celebrating by inviting members of the public to create and share a Haiku based on the theme for National Poetry Day which this year is 'Vision'.

- Our next exciting event will be Libraries Week. This is an annual week-long celebration of books and reading - which this year takes place between the 5th and 10th October and again we will be inviting people to get involved. We will be posting throughout the week to ask people ... What you like to read. ... How would you describe your favourite book? ... Where is your favourite reading place? We will also be giving an insight to what some of our favourite authors have been up to over the past few months and show how, sometimes, it might be difficult to tell the reader from the story.